

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5076

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Natural Resources, Parks & Recreation, January 27, 1999

Title: An act relating to Puget Sound marine fish preserves.

Brief Description: Authorizing the creation of bottomfish preserves.

Sponsors: Senators Oke, Jacobsen and T. Sheldon.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Natural Resources, Parks & Recreation: 1/20/99, 1/27/99 [DPS-WM].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES, PARKS & RECREATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5076 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Jacobsen, Chair; T. Sheldon, Vice Chair; Hargrove, Morton, Oke, Rossi, Stevens.

Staff: Ross Antipa (786-7413)

Background: Marine fish, commonly known as bottomfish, have been over-harvested within Puget Sound, the Straits of Juan de Fuca, Admiralty Inlet, the San Juan Islands, and the Straits of Georgia. Conservation measures employed by the Fish and Wildlife Commission have not been sufficient to allow for rebuilding of bottomfish stocks.

The establishment of a preserve for marine fish in the town of Edmonds has resulted in healthy populations of bottomfish. A Puget Sound program for marine bottomfish preserves could assure the survival and rebuilding of bottomfish stocks.

Summary of Substitute Bill: The Fish and Wildlife Commission must establish a minimum of 20 percent of the rocky reef habitat as marine bottomfish preserves within Puget Sound, the Straits of Juan de Fuca, Admiralty Inlet, the San Juan Islands and the Straits of Georgia. Marine preserves are located in suitable habitat areas to protect ling cod, rockfish, cabezon, greenling, and other depleted species. Harvesting of fish life within preserves is prohibited.

Public hearings must be conducted before establishment of preserves. Treaty Indian tribes must also be consulted and they must agree not to fish for bottomfish in the preserves. The commission must report the progress of the program to the Legislature by January 1, 2000.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The scope of the bill is increased to 20 percent of the marine rocky reef habitat rather than 20 marine preserves. Pacific cod, walleye pollock, and tom cod are removed from the bill. The prohibition on harvesting shellfish within preserves is removed. The consultation and involvement of treaty tribes is increased

and preserves must be agreed upon by the tribes and commission as no fishing zones for marine bottom fish.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 12, 1999.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: Marine bottomfish are depleted and they need a program that establishes preserves for their protection.

Testimony Against: The commission currently has the authority to close areas to fishing and the bill is not needed.

Testified: Paul Silver, Dept. of Natural Resources (con); Lynn Norden (con); Bruce John Higgins (pro); Bruce Crawford, WDFW (pro); John Williams, WA Scuba Alliance (pro); Mike Murray (pro); Bruce Wishart, People for Puget Sound (pro); John Dohrman, Puget Sound Water Quality Action Team (pro); Ed Owens, Coalition of Coastal Fishers (w/concerns).